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A political writer presents the case for maintaining small schools in Minnesota and not entering into drastic consolidation of school districts as recommended by the Domian Report. Small School superintendents' replies to a survey, results of educational studies and reports, the work of small school projects, and quotations from prominent educators and other national figures are cited in pointing out the unique features of small schools. Flexibility in programing, an individualized approach to students, and an excellent teacher-student situation are among advantages discussed. It is concluded that in place of consolidation, local control should be maintained and the legislature should strengthen, encourage, and promote small schools. A bibliography and copy of superintendents' survey form concludes the document. (SW)

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Speech before Minnesota
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THE CASE FOR THE SMALL SCHOOLS

I am very pleased to be here today to help plead the Case for the Small Schools. We all want the very best education possible for the children of Minnesota. And the question is: what is the best kind? The Domian Report recommends a drastic consolidation of school districts. However, other reports, surveys and opinions show that the small school, with its emphasis on the individual student, is the ideal size, and small schools are in the forefront in the future of education. Because of the advantages the small, personal schools have over the large, impersonal schools, our small schools in Minnesota should be strengthed instead of being closed.

I think I should explain that I got into this fascinating field because I write political columns for 8 newspapers here in Minnesota. At a political meeting last summer, one of the Legislators made a chance remark about the small schools being closed very soon. I thought this might be something to write about. I hadn't heard of the Domian Report at that time.

Since I knew that the school in Milan was doing a fine job, I decided to ask other superintendents of small schools around the state what was happening in their schools, and if they thought small schools should be closed. I wrote 116 superintendents, and surprisingly and very unexpectedly, I received 82 answers.

If those superintendents had simply filled in the short survey I sent them, I probably would have written on nostalgic column about the demise of small schools, and then gone back to blasting the federal government for spending $24,000 for one flag pole.

But instead, those superintendents wrote comments and even letters on how deeply concerned they were about the small schools, and they were

vehement about what a good job the small schools are doing.

A class in statistics at the University of Minnesota, Morris, is working on my survey right now, and it isn't completed. But I did make graphs of some of it for you to see.

Some of the questions I asked were: the number in the school, the number in the Senior Class, the number of drop-outs last year, and the percentage of students who went on to school.

I was interested in the number of students taking part in extra-curricular activities. Today, they seem to be almost as important as the actual courses in a school. I have an article which quotes the Admission Director at Carleton College, Mr. Gavin, in which he says that he will choose the student with the lower grades but with more activitie: participation over a student who only concentrates on his grades.

Then I asked about how much interest the parents took in the small schools. And, as you can guess, the parents took a great deal of interest in the schools. The farther away a school is, the less interested parents feel. Wilbur J. Cohen, Undersecretary of Health, Educatio: and Welfare, said in a speech on "Revitalizing the Schools", "Parents must play a large role in school planning, school decision and school operation."

To find out more about the relationship between parents, students and teachers, I asked whether the teachers were entertained in the homes.

But the most significant part of my survey was what the superintendents said about the small schools. I firmly believe, after I read their comments, that these men are the most dedicated people in the country. They really are concerned about the youngsters getting a good education. And the very best chance for a good life.

I'm going to read just a few of those comments. Mr. O. L. Engle of Huntley, Minnesota, wrote: "Children must be convinced that they ha:

worth, value, dignity as individuals which can best be done where they are known as individuals by the faculty and their peers alike. Every child needs to succeed in something. He can do this where his opportunities to participate are greatest, in the small school."

Mr. E. L. Erickson of Emmons said, "Disciplinary problems are greater in proportion and in type in a large school. All arguments to the contrary, rural students definitely are slighted in a large school, if for no other reason than the fact that they must spend so much time in travel."

Mr. Theodore B. Olson of Hendrum wrote, "One of the facets of this which impresses me the most is the fact that during my tenure as adminstrator in Hendrum, we have had 155 graduates which is only 22 per year, but of these, not one has become a burden to society. Each of them is a contributing member, not on welfare, relief, or as a recipient of some other form of charity. This is, of course, the ultimate goal of education, that each individual becomes a useful, contributing member of our society."

This one shows real love for young people. Mr. H. L. Point of Russell said, "Rural boys and girls will lose out on practically all activities in larger shcoools. Our Kings and Queens would never have tha satisfying experience. It is a thrill to be a King and Queen, even a King and Queen over a small group."

Mr. Monte R. Shanks of Verdi, Minnesota said, "I find that students who are shy, those who are a little obese, and those who do not meet the present day standards of being beautiful or goodlooking find their place in the activities, in many cases become leaders, in a small school. This type of individual would be lost in a large school. I marvel many times at the relatively shy person who "blossoms" out in the small school."

It really seems incredible that there is a possibility today that dedicated superintendents like these will be deprived of small schools to take care of. And if the students under those superintendents are deprived of anything, I don't know what it could be. I think those students are among the luckiest ones in the state.

Of course, I wondered if those superintendents could be a little prejudiced. And to paraphrase Emerson, "The proof is in the pudding." So I wrote to five colleges here in Minnesota; Gustavus, Macalister, Hamline, St. Olaf, and Concordia. I asked if they had any records of any differences between students from small high schools and those from large ones. Four of the colleges said they didn't have any records of any differences. But Concordia had made a study of drop-outs of the freshman class several years ago and this is what that study said: "High schools with an enrollment of from 0 to 50 had the largest percentage of dropouts, when a comparison was made of dropouts in proportion to the total number of students enrolled from high schools of that size. And high schools with enrollments of from 500 and over had the second largest percentage of dropouts when a comparison was made of the total number of dropouts in proportion to the total number of students enrolled from high schools of that size. That study was made by Wallace Pottenger, Admission Counselor at Concordia. And that sounds pretty good for the small schools.

Then I wrote some of the big companies in the Twin Cities and asked the same question in order to find out how students fared who didn't attend college. None of the companies had any records of any differences in employees coming from large or small schools. Mr. W. E. Walsh of Minnesota Mining did suggest that it would be nice if small schools could have courses which would help the girls especially get jobs. So I asked what courses he recommended. And he said typing and

shorthand.

The Domian Report had come out by this time, so I looked up in the Report on page 83, and Table 27 shows a study of courses given in schools of 300 and less. According to that table, 95% of those small schools had typing, and 75% had shorthand.

After going this far with my research, I decided to find out more about the small schools. I wrote our Congressman, John Zwack for information; Secretary Freeman, because he's been pushing the rural redevelopment program; and of course, the U.S. Office of Education. And then I really started getting reports and studies. And they in turn gave me more sources.

I received a report, "Enrollment Size and Educational Effectiveness of the High School" by Grace S. Wright. It has 18 studies of big and small schools. And I discovered that the Domian Report quotes from this book. On page 300, is this quotation: "Wright found the evidence from the 18 studies inconclusive, but was able to conclude...that high school enrollment size should be less than 2000 but no smaller than is required to have at least 100 students in the graduating class." What caused that "inconclusive conclusion" was the fact that almost half of the studies showed that small schools do as good a job as large schools. For instance, one study in this book, by Donald P. Hoyt on the "Size of High School and College Grades", finds that in terms of potential college work, differences among students from various sized high schools were no larger than anticipated, that 1st year grades in college were about the same level, that high school rank was as good a predictor of college grades from small high schools as from large ones." So you can see why the conclusion was inconclusive.

Then I saw a reference to the Coleman Report. This report, which was put out by the U.S. Office of Education, has 737 pages, it studied

3000 schools, 650,000 students, more than 60,000 teachers, several thousand principals and superintendents. This particular reference to the Coleman Report was in an ad in the news magazine, Human Events. And this is what the ad said," The Coleman Report discloses that it seems to make no significant difference if a school has elaborate new buildings or limited old ones, if it has well trained or poorly trained teachers! The Coleman Report discloses that many programs - Head Start, guidance counseling - often have a damaging effect on students. The Coleman Report discloses that the only important determining factor in the academic and social success of the American school child is the kind of children with whom they go to school. These findings are ridiculous. But they are true." This ad was for a private school, the Green Valley School in Orange City, Florida.

Later, I read a review of the Coleman Report in the January Saturday Review by Henry M. Levin, Research Associate, Brookings Institution. He quotes from this Report: "1. Per-pupil expenditures, books in the library, and a number of other facilities and curricular measures show very little relation to achievement if the social background and attitudes of individual students and their school mates are held constant. 2. The effect of a student's peers on his own achievement level is more important than any other school influence." If the Coleman Report is right, it could change a lot of things in education.

Another report put out by the National Education Association, "Efficient School Size" says in the first paragraph, "How big, or small, is the ideal school? There is little agreement on an answer to this question. Most of the answers are opinions, based on experience or derived from a particular philosophy of education, with few research findings available. Indeed, research of this kind is extremely difficult to conduct."

However, one survey, by K.O. Broady, "Small School Systems", Encyclopodia of Educational Research, said, "If schools are rated on academic achievement of the students alone, little difference can be found between large and small schools". Another report by Ledbetter, Victor and Watson, "Are Small Schools Necessary," found,". . . there were no significant differences in the academic qualifications of students from large and small schools on the campuses of the University of California on the basis of grade point average." That was a 20 year study.

Let me give you some other interesting items. On page 304 in the Domian Report is a quotation by Leonard Feldt which says that graduates of small schools in Iowa achieve significantly below graduates of larger schools. But I found another Iowa study, by Irvine T. Lathrop, "Scholastic Achievement at Iowa State College Associated with High School Size and Course Pattern" Journal of Experimental Education, which reported that the size of the high school in relation to quality point average in colleges may be disregarded.

On page 302 of the Domian Report, Fitzwater is quoted as saying that the results of reorganization means expanded programs and services. But I have a study by Edmonson, Roemer and Bacon which says that "a school undergoes significant changes when it becomes large, that administration tends toward the mechanical and impersonal, that mass management of both the faculty and students replaces the individual attention which is possible in a small school."

I found other reports too which said that small schools do as well and better in many ways than large schools. So I concluded that the superintendents who wrote me were right in their belief in the small schools.

I wondered then what could be done to make the small schools even stronger, and I discovered that some states are working on that very

[illegible] through their Small School Project. So I wrote them for information about what they are doing.

Almost right away, I got a telephone call from Professor Edgar Charles at the University of New Mexico. He was very interested in what is happening here in Minnesota. A few days later, he wrote me, "I do feel that a small school, adequately organized and having a clear understanding of its problems, may achieve a level of excellence unexpected by many." He went on to say that small schools have two natural advantages widely sought by larger organizations. They are: 1, flexibility. They have fewer people, which means fewer logistical complications so teachers and administrators can be more creative in solutions of problems. And, 2; small schools have closeness. They can treat all persons as individuals. He went on in his letter, "Even Dr. Domian and his associates cannot deny the recognized importance today of individualization."

Charles P. Haggerty, Director of the Oregon Small High School Program wrote me, "Although many small schools may not need to exist, a blanket closure of small schools based on numbers and distances could do irreparable harm. With this age of technology, it is now possible to overcome most, if not all, the former weaknesses of the rural areas and turn them to advantage. Obviously, the trend toward consolidation is generated more in the interest of saving the immediate dollar, and of course, we should be concerned with buying the best possible education. But when schools become so large that they become impersonal, then the dollar saved often must be spent back a hundred times to correct the side effects that results from over-urbanization." Dr. Haggerty mentions too the great potential for flexibility in small schools because of their less complex administrative structure.

Texas has a fine Small Schools Project too. I talked to Dr. Charles

Merrill, one of the Consultants in Instruction in this Project, and I asked him if this Project had been set up because of the great distance in Texas which would prevent consolidation. He said that many of the schools were close together, and distance didn't have anything to do with it. The material he sent me stresses the individual attention which students receive in small schools.

North Dakota has a Small School Project too. And one school really came through. Ordinarily, only large schools can afford to have indoor swimming pools at $8,000 a splash. But here is a small school in North Dakota with its own indoor pool...in fact, it has two indoor pools...they are large portable swimming pools which are set up for a few months during the winter. What could be simpler than that? Someone was really creative there. And was thinking of the youngsters.

What impressed me about the North Dakota Project was a sentence in one of the reports. 'Of special benefit was the morale factor apparent among staffs of project schools: their identification with a progessive, forward-moving school system was heard repeatedly from teachers who almost glowed as they showed the changes they were exploring." And when a teacher glows with enthusiasm, the students are going to learn.

A report on the Catskill Area Project in New York says, ...It is the belief of educators, psychologists, and other concerned with learning that the small group is best for human endeavor· it generally in the small groups, they say, that real accomplishments take place. The best program design for small schools is emerging as one that capitalizes on the fact of smallness." Flexibility was one of the key factors in this Project too.

I'm sure you are familiar with all the new methods available now for all schools, and these Small School Projects make use of them.... inter-school classes, students taking courses in nearby colleges, the

multiple classes, the whole array of school aids like TV and phone hook-ups, films, tapes, correspondence courses, and other technological teaching equipment.

On the subject of new methods in education, in an article in the Pacific Stars and Stripes (my 23 year-old daughter is in Saigon, and she sent me this clipping) the National Education Association says that we're going back to the one room school....have different grades in one room. It seems we're coming full circle in education.

This brings up those 80 different courses which the Domian Report stresses as necessary for a quality education. It is true that a few years ago, small schools could not offer very many different courses. Today, however, with all these exciting new school aids and the new methods of teaching, every small school can offer any course. For instance, in one school in the Catskill Project, the students took a course in Logic. On Saturday, they went to a college for one lesson in Logic, and the rest of the week, they studied it by using a teaching machine under the supervision of a local teacher. And a school in Colorado had a debate with a school in New York State by telephone, and the judges were professors from three different colleges.

Today, any school will be able to hear a lecture by Arthur Schlesinger Jr. Some of the poets, like Robert Lowell, can talk to a class in English and the students can ask him questions. Think how delighted some politicians would be to give a talk on government. Today, nothing is impossible for the small schools. And as the report said, the teachers glowed with enthusiasm.

I'm sure you're familiar with the wonderful, new Educational Media Center in Montevideo. This Center provides about 7 counties with all the necessary services for these new school aids. It has over 2000 sound films, and in a short time will have 4000 films. It has thousands

of tapes, film strips, transparencies, everything the schools need. Two trucks go to each school in the area twice a week. And if the schools don't have the equipment to use the aids, they can borrow it from the Center. I hope you can visit this Center. It's the only one in the state so far, and the Director, Mr. Jauss, thinks there should be at least 8 centers around the state. Then every school, big and small, could have all the schoolaids they can use.

There's another kind of center at Willmar. This is a Special Service Center which sends out a Psychologist, a home visiting teacher, a counselor, a consulting technician, a curriculum counselor, and a speech therapist to every school at least once a week or oftener if they are needed. These counselors can see more students more often than the counselors in large schools. For instance, in Bismark, North Dakota, there are 1500 Students and 2 counselors. The students stand in line to see the counselors, and they say that after they wait in line at least 4 times they give up. The counselors say, "We've been so overloaded in our casework that there isn't time to give extra attention to students with special adjustment problems."

Small schools today can have all the specialists and special equipment which is available.

We all agree that our Minnesota small schools have turned out exciting graduates. Maybe these people were handicapped by the lack of 80 courses in their schools, but maybe too their chances for being individuals with responsibility for making their own decisions were enhanced by going to small schools. Did you know that Keith True from Granada, Minnesota is one of 2 students in Minnesota to be named by the National Association of Secondary Principals to the top 43 scholars in the whole United States? And Paul Carpenter, also of Granada is the top Sophmore Chemistry student at the University of Minnesota? And

Granada has 200 students. Dr. Sherwood Berg, of the University of Minnesota, came from Hendrum which has 151 students. And Billy Williams, the manager of the Metropolitan Stadium in Bloomington came from a school with 210 students...Motley, Minnesota. You won't find a small school in Minnesota which hasn't had successful people, and by that, I mean people who can earn their living and make a fine contribution to society.

I am sure that the people who are recommending this consolidation plan for Minnesota are sincere and dedicated. They do not want to hurt our educational system. But the big question is why these "consolidation" advocates are so set on closing our small schools when the biggest problems are found in the large schools. As Mr. Shanks of Verdi wrote, "A small school has no riot problems, no drug problems, and no discipline problems of any great proportion."

Vice Admiral Rickover, in a Chamber of Commerce speech on November 16,1967, recommended having high schools of only several hundred students like the European schools. He explained why. "Even college students resent having to obtain their education in gigantic knowledge factories. Their sense of being cheated by the adult world is at the bottom of most of the student revolts across the nation. And the students are right. Educational gigantism has no justification in terms of the needs of students."

Recently in Washington, D.C. the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights had a meeting about educational opportunities. The delegates at this meeting really upset the applecart for U.S. Commissioner Harold Howe. It seems that Mr. Howe has plans too for a long-range goal of educational parks and school complexes which will bring together thousands of children in a carefully regimented environment, and it is to be controlled by the Federal government. But the delegates at this convention were not one bit concerned about bringing all the students into

large new schools as the Commissioner had expected. Instead, they wanted their own, local schools upgraded and improved. And they insisted on local control of their schools.

I even wrote to the Superintendent of the New York City schools. Of course, the New York schools are a special case, but Dr. Donovan said that it's the bigness that's appalling, and its at the root of all their difficulties. New York is planning now on decentralizing its schools. McGeorge Bundy with the Ford Foundation studied the situation in New York, and they came up with the idea of having smaller neighborhood schools with local school boards running them.

One study I found said that the smallest schools in California did the best job of education the youngsters, and then I discovered that the smallest schools out there have 1500 students. But a short time later, I read in the Congressional Record that California's statewide reading ability is substantially below that of the national sample, in the Standord Reading Test. And the Los Angeles first graders are in the bottom 7% of the national norm in reading, the 6th graders are in the lower 20% nationally, and the 10th graders scored in the lower 35%. And their smallest schools are 1500.

In the Washington Post for March 30th, 1968, was a write-up about a new, huge 3900 pupil high school in Fairfax County which will open next fall. The school officials claim that the plans are to keep the huge size of the plant from swallowing up the identity of its pupils. The school will be broken down into 6 schools-within-a-school, and each one will have its own administrative staff, principal, and "hopefully, its own character." This plan was worked out by school officials because they were concerened that students might be "dehumanized" in one large school. One school official said, "We think this has tremendous potential for learning about students....and the students

will benefit from this flexibility, and have increased identification with their separate schools".

That is sad. Here they have to build one huge school to economize on construction costs, and then they have to break it all down again into small schools to try to help the students from becoming "dehumanized". And isn't it ironic, when we already have successful small schools, that we might be forced to put them together into "dehumanizing" large schools?

A school in Kansas City went the other way though. Twenty-three experienced school teachers took special college training in teaching individualized programs before they started in this one experimental small school. They learned to be familiar with each other's work. Usually teachers go into schools without knowing each other or what goes on in the rest of the schools. There were 670 applications for those 23 jobs,

That same idea was brought out by Superintendent R.E. Westling of Henderson,Minnesota. He wrote me, "Teachers who start in a small school become better teachers because they get to know the total problem involved in the system plus the problems in other departments besides their own."

Some experts believe that the impersonality of the large schools is in back of the teacher unrest today. James Cass and Max Birnban of Boston University say in the Saturday Review of January 1968 that, "As education took more and more of the features of a mass production process, the class teacher was progressively removed from the central functioning of the school. A growing number of teachers today, it appears, do not feel an intergal part of the community in which they teach."

Another part of the problem of students losing their individuality in big schools is the growing stress and tension in too many student's lives today. It started with the launching of Sputnik in 1957, and it is too big a factor right now for too many students. Suicide is the 2nd highest cause of death among teen-agers. Accidents come first. Bright youngsters are pushed beyond their limits. And too often they fall apart. Dr. Carroll King of Northwestern University claims that after 4 years of high school, "the typical youngster becomes a 'tired old man'. We have asked him to do too much, too soon and we have asked him to keep at it too long." Dr. King says that our school system, which was created to serve the student, is rapidly making a slave of him instead.

I have letters from superintendents of some of the large suburban schools near Minneapolis. They all say their biggest advantage is the number of courses they can offer, but their biggest disadvantage is the lack of individuality for their students. One superintendent wrote that his school could handle the very bright students and the slower students, but he was afraid that..." with great numbers of students such as we have, there are masses in the middle, I fear, that are treated with a good degree of impersonality."

Arnold Toynbee, the famous historian, said on Educational TV several weeks ago that the emphasis today should be on the individual, that uniqueness is essential. And how can a youngster be unique when he ends up as just another number in an office computer in a big school?

The Domain Report quotes John W. Gardner, ex-Secretary of Health, Education and Welfare,on page 72, about the principle of multiple chances, "a youngster should have many successive opportunities to discover himself." That implies that he'll get those chances only in

a big school. Let me quote Mr. Gardener too. In the Congressional Record of November 6, 1967, he said, "There is a rising concern for the impersonality of modern society, the sense of anonymity, feelings on the part of the citizen that he doesn't have a chance to have his say, that he doesn't have a role. Now, the only place, the only level, at which that can be cured is the local level."

The big schools biggest problem is being big. And another big problem these big schools will inherit if the State Department is given even more power to make decisions, is the definite possibility of making a whooper of a mistake. If a small school tried out a new method or plan, and it doesn't work, it won't effect too many students and teachers. And the unsuccessful plan can be changed easily. But when a school is big, and every big school in the state must comply with the State Department's directive, what happens if the plan turns out to be a dud?

You probably heard about the time several years ago when Russia tried out something new in the schools. Since all the schools i n Russia are under one department, every school in the whole country had to put in this new idea. They were to have 13 years of school instead of 12. Well, they found it didn't work out. That meant that every single school in the country had made the same mistake. To top it off, when they ~~stopped this~~ new plan and went back to 12 years of school, it almost wrecked the labor market because two classes from every school in Russia hit the labor market at the same time.

Professor Milton Friedman says, "By and large, education remains a state monopoly, which, like most establishments of the kind, tends increasingly to be run less for the benefit of the citizen than for that of the staff."

Conformity is one of the most stifling things that can happen to

society. People want to be different from everyone else. Yet the recommendation in the Domian Report is to have only a few schools, and all the districts are to be just the same. If they don't conform, they'll be punished. But they'll be rewarded by the State Department if they're good and obey all the rules.

What kind of individuality are our children going to have if every child must attend a school which is exactly the same as every other school? Why is the State Department afraid of having local people run their own schools? Or of having hundreds of superintendents instead of 150 or less? Why must all schools under 300 be closed rapidly by legislative action? Why can't our state have big schools and middle-sized schools and small schools as long as they do a good job?

A week ago, at a meeting in Bird Island, Senator Holmquist told the audience that no plan concerning the schools would be approved by the Legislature which would take away the right of the local people to decide what they wanted to do about their own schools. He stressed over and over that the people had the final say. It was very reassuring.

The only trouble is it hasn't worked out that way. Let me tell you about it. The small schools of Chandler and Lake Wilson here in Minnesota are only about 4 miles apart, and they decided to work together to improve their schools. Their plan was to have the Junior High in one town and the Senior High in the other. They would use the same number of teachers they already had, which would give them a higher teacher-pupil ratio than most schools that size. After the school boards and superintendents of Chandler and Lake Wilson had carefully worked out the details of this plan, they met with the State Commissioner and asked his permission to try this plan out for a year or two. And the Commissioner said no! He told them it would interfere with his plans for consolidation, and he made it very clear that he would put his stamp

of approval on only 4 schools in the entire 4 Southwestern Minnesota Counties.

Now, I'm wondering what would have happened in this case if we'd had a Small School Project here in Minnesota? Could it be that Chandler and Lake Wilson would have been given all the aid and encouragement they needed to set up their plan and try it out? If it didn't work, they could easily change to something else. This involves only 2 small schools; not every large school in the state. But instead of getting cooperation and help, they had their initiative and their enthusiasm stepped on hard.

One of the main objectives in education is to build initiative and responsibility in our citizens. But how can we promote those very important traits when they are not allowed to develop? Where are we going to get our leadership, our quick-thinking, flexible, experienced leadership, if no one can try his wings? Instead of being marched about on the orders of a few folks, all the people in the state should have the freedom to learn to run their own affairs, which includes their schools.

An editorial in the National Observer said, "Local control over public education is more than a hallowed tradition; it encourages a variety of approaches through-out the nation - experimentation, if you will."

Professor Robert L. Cunningham said, "Monopolies, whether in education or any other realm, rarely are noted for their efficiency or quality."

We should take care that a state monopoly in education doesn't stifle our wonderful educational system in Minnesota.

You know, the fascinating thing about all this is the more you find out about the schools, the more interesting questions pop up. For

instance, why should the special schools for drop-outs and bright students do a better job in teaching youngsters than some of the large schools? Have you heard about the Pratt School in Omaha? It's for over-privileged children with too much money who go there for individual instruction. In an interview on TV on the Today Show, the students said that in the big schools where they'd gone before, they were just numbers. In the small Pratt School, they were treated as individuals, and they could talk to the teachers and counselors any time they wanted to. The Principal of the Pratt School wrote me this: "Each student is an individual. Each teacher affords each student the very best instruction geared to his needs. All the expensive equipment of taxpayers' money cannot compare to the human equation of daily conferences and tutoring."

About three weeks ago on Educational TV, there was a program about the special school for dropout in Ramsey County. The people on the panel told how they made this special school more interesting than the public schools in St. Paul by stressing "individualistic teaching". They said they tried to make this special school less threatening than public schools. There are small classes with 1 teacher to 7 or 8 students. They wanted enthusiastic teachers who were willing to change and to have flexible programs. And the most important thing they do is to put the student first above everything else.

Last summer the Minneapolis and St. Paul schools had a 6 week special program for bright high school students. More than 800 students applied, but there were only 330 openings. And the reason for that? Mr. Ober, the Assistant Superintendent explained: "We want to keep it small enough to give the students plenty of opportunity for personal contact with students of similar and different talents. Maybe the solution would be to have several institutions."

Yet we might find ourselves with only a few large institutions scattered around the state.

Maybe 30 years ago rural folks were isolated and slow. But not today. These people travel all over the world. Their youngsters travel. They know what's going on in politics and world affairs, in fashion and in food. I'll bet that on the average, more people from the rural communities in Minnesota have been to the Guthrie Theater than city people.

These rural parents want a good education for their children. They are not going to settle for less. And they are very willing to back any efforts to upgrade the local schools. The parents and children need these local schools. And the schools need the parents. George C. Kellar said in American Education, March 1967, "We have mounting evidence that the family is the chief determinant in developing talented children. On the other hand, most efforts to raise the intellectual level of children are concentrated on improving the schools. Thus, the lack of attention to family influence may be the most serious oversight in American education."

When it is possible today for the parents in the rural communities to provide a top education for their youngsters in their own local schools, they are not happy with the idea of having their children forced to go to another community miles away to school.

A study by Roy C. Buck in the Journal of Educational Sociology, "School District Reorgainzation: Some Considerations for Socialogical Research", reports: "These questions should be answered: 1. When youth are lifted out of the primary contacts of home and neighborhood, what, if any, are the effects on discipline and deliquency? 2. Is the leadership base among yout actually broadened (as claimed by the reorganization or does the highly competitive situation actually "squeeze out"

many capable youth? 3. Since the school is often the center of the secular life of the community, a strong force which draws parents into relations with each other, to what extent does reorganization alter the patterns of adult association? Any plans of reorganization will also have to take account of the community's sentiments and ties to the local school for reorganization which neglects this sentiment may cause such discontent that its values will be lost."

I believe if there's one thing which out to stop consolidation in its tracks, it's the busing situation. Unfortunately, a school bus will never be able to substitute for a Greyhound in comfort, but that's a minor point. It's the long, wasted hours that youngsters spend on the school bus which is important. I have letters from people all around the state who are terribly concerned about just that one angle of consolidation. Mrs. Clarence Eraker, of Winger, Minnesota, wrote: "If some of these people who are pushing this through(consolidation) would bring their families to Northern Minnesota for a winter to ride school buses and take part in school activities miles away from their homes, they would better realize what it means for the parents and children to have schools located in their own communities."

Surprisingly, even people in the cities object to busing. A Mrs. Swan of Minneapolis was quoted in the Star as saying, "If there is to be more integration then we want reverse busing. Our children are too young to undergo the hardship of busing." And that is in the city, not out on country roads during a Minnesota winter.

At one of the meetings which was held to explain the Domian Report, a State Department spokesman mentioned the idea of dormitories for students who had to travel long distances after "consolidation". It horrified a lot of people. If there's one time in a youngster's life when he needs a firm hand, it's the time he's in high school.

Now, when should a small school be closed? That should be a question for the local community to decide. People are smart enough to know when they can't provide a good school. Then, when a school closes, it will be a "natural" closing of a small school instead of an Unpleasant, forced one. And who knows, in a few years, people in the cities might get so fed up with the problems of crowding together, they"ll move back into the country. Stranger things have happened.

Superintendent E. C. Rostedt of Kennsington, Minnesota, has the right idea when he said, "Minnesota has done an outstanding job in education. If this has been done through Minnesota's many small schools, then we should have even more small schools."

So, in place of the Domian Report's recommendation to close all the small schools and force drastic consolidation, I respectfully submit another plan: Since Minnesota has the best teachers and administrators in the country, and since our small schools are doing a fine job now in education, the Legislature should strengthen, encourage and promote the small schools into becoming the leaders in all the new, exciting educational methods there are today. Small schools already have the built-in advantages of flexibility in programing; in having the much desired "individual" approach to students; and an excellent teacher-student situation; therefore, the small schools can become the "elite" of our educational system in Minnesota.

To close this chapter of the "Case for the Small Schools", I want to quote the Domian Report again, on page 304. It says, "It is possible that there are some subtle benefits gained in the unique atmosphere of a small school".

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Margery Burns SURVEY

Name of High School Name of Superintendent

1. Number of students in this school, grades 7-12. Medium - 250 students

   Number of students in the Senior Class of 1968. Medium - 35 students

2. We had Medium -1- drop-outs last year in this school.

3. In the teacher-student ratio, we have ____teachers for ____students.

4. About Medium 60% of our graduates go on to college, Jr. college, trade schools, nursing schools, etc.

5. We have the following activities: Medium - 11 activities

____Band	____Class parties	____Other activities
____Choir	____Newspapers	
____Other musical groups	____Football	
____Class plays	____Basketball	
____Declam	____Wrestling	
____Debate	____Track	

6. Approximately what % of students in high school take part in one or more of these activities? Medium - 90% of students

7. What % of the boys take part in athletics? Medium - 60% to 70%

8. Parents of our students take a (great) (medium) (small) interest in school.
   In 50 schools interest was great
   In 28 schools interest was medium
   In 1 school interest was medium to small
   In 3 schools interest was small

9. Teachers are entertained in the homes of some of our students (Yes) (No)
   In 53 schools answer was "Yes".
   In 5 schools answer was "Some".
   In 21 schools answer was "No".

10. Teachers get to know the parents and background of students (Yes) (No)
    In 77 schools answer was "Yes".
    In 1 school answer was "Some".
    In 3 schools answer was "No".

11. Our teachers all do some counseling regularly as they talk to students in and out of school. (Yes) (No)
    In 76 schools answer was "Yes".
    In 3 schools answer was "No".

12. Our school, with the churches, is center of activity in community (Yes) (No)
    In 81 schools answer was "Yes".
    In 1 school answer was "No".